



Coordination Becomes National Issue With Executive Order

Although it often seems the wheels turn too slowly, they do turn, and usually in the right direction. Coordination has been, for the past several decades, a continual (almost habitual) topic of concern among public transportation providers and those who fund public transportation. In February, the President gave the wheels a big spin.

On February 24, 2004 President George W. Bush signed an Executive Order concerning Human Service Transportation Coordination. The Executive Order brought into focus efforts that have been underway for some time. Specifically, it created a Presidential vehicle, in the form of the Interagency Transportation Coordination Council, through which various on-going federal efforts can now be put in high gear.

Background

As far back as the 1970's there has been a recognized need for coordination. The House Public Works and Transportation Committee (now convened as the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee) held hearings in 1977 on improving transportation services for the elderly and disabled. Then-Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams testified at the hearings that, "Any program addressing these needs (transportation needs of the elderly and disabled) should

include some mechanism for coordinating the wide variety of federally assisted transportation services currently provided in these areas under a number of social service programs."

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) released a report in 1977 stating that the most significant hindrance to coordinating transportation services under federal programs was confusion at all levels of government as to how much coordination federally funded projects could engage in.

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Brock Adams

Secretary of Transportation - 1977

In 1986, the U.S. Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Health and Human Services (DHHS) formed a joint DHHS/DOT Coordinating Council on Human Services Transportation. The two Department Secretaries signed a Memorandum of Understanding forming the Council in an effort to improve mobility. The Council's

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Notes from the Top

We are well into 2004 and, as usual, things are moving pretty fast. We bid a fond farewell to outgoing Secretary Kam Movassaghi and sincerely wish Dr. Kam the very best in his new endeavors.

We welcome Governor Blanco's new appointee Mr. Johnny B. Bradberry as Secretary of DOTD. Mr. Bradberry is a native of Grand Isle and worked in a variety of management positions for ConocoPhillips Company since being hired as an engineer in 1977. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from LeTourneau University in Longview Texas in 1973 and his Masters of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from LSU in 1976. As Secretary of DOTD, Mr. Bradberry will lead a staff of 5,300 with an annual budget of more than \$1 billion.



We have been extremely short-handed since the end of October when Darlene St. Roman, Rural Program Manager, went on family leave. She has retired as of March 2004 and we are in the process of filling her position. Administrative Secretary Cherie Doyle, our only clerical position, resigned on March 16 to pursue employment in the private sector. The Public Transportation staff has been "hanging in" but a special thanks to Michelle Horne, Assistant Rural Program Manager; Kay Ryall, Program Specialist; and Donna Lavigne, my Assistant Administrator.

The Annual South West Transit Association (SWTA) conference was held the last week of January here in Baton Rouge. DOTD helped sponsor the conference and it was a great success, with over 300 attendees. A

special treat for conference attendees was a demonstration of the Serena's Song, the world's first wheelchair accessible hot-air balloon approved by the Federal Aviation Administration.

DOTD Public Transportation continues to work with our consultants on a Safety and Security Standard for the State. The effort is substantially complete. However, several efforts at the federal level will affect our Standard and we are waiting to ensure that all the bases will be covered. More on this topic later.

Most of you have either seen, used, or been contacted to contribute information to our Louisiana Transit Resource Guide. The Guide was updated last year and placed on our website in an interactive user-friendly format. The Guide provides information on transportation providers across the state by parish and will be updated yearly. Speaking of which, those of you who are providers should expect a call from our consultant, Alliance Transportation Group, to update your information in the next month.

We are working on driver training classes to be held either in the 2nd or 3rd quarter of this year. The classes will be held at various locations across the state, look for more on this topic soon.

On a final note, our prayers go out to Mrs. Margaret Powe, Executive Director, St. Charles COA. She was involved in a serious accident on March 27 and is in Intensive Care at a local hospital. You may contact the St. Charles COA at (985) 783-6683 for more information.

Announcements

Louisiana Urban Transit Systems

On February 11, 2004 a Federal Register notice was released containing the FTA FY 2004 apportionments. The Notice reflects FTA *Allocated Amounts* as well as the *Available Allocated Amounts* for each grant recipient. Please remember that you can only receive up to the *available amounts* until such time that the full apportionment is approved. To access the Notice please go to the Federal Register website at: www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/ the type 6726 in the search box and click submit.

PASS Certification Training

LaDOTD sponsored a three day Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) certification training in March. The training provided basic information on various mobility aids, vehicle accessibility equipment like wheelchair lifts, and securing mobility

aids. Some advantages of PASS certification include the ability to reduce organizational liability; comprehensive, up-to-date training on the assistance drivers should be providing to special needs passengers; intensive emergency situation training; and updates on regulatory changes.

Faye Nash, CTAA representative, presented the training to 20 participants from various agencies. The training was a great success. Attendees were tested and certified as PASS trainers and will now be able to instruct community transportation drivers throughout Louisiana in passenger assistance and sensitivity skills. All certified participants are expected to conduct three workshops per year.

Contact Wanda Walker, TTAP Program Manager for a list of PASS Instructors.

Events Calendar

Upcoming APTA Conferences:

2004 Commuter Rail Conference
April 17-20 Atlantic City, NJ

Bus & Paratransit Conference
May 2-5 Denver, CO

Bus Rapid Transit Conference
May 5-6 Denver, CO

For more information on APTA conferences, please visit:
www.apta.com/conferences_calendar/

Transportation Safety Institute Classes
Courses are offered around the country on various topics throughout the year. For more information, please visit:
www.tsi.dot.gov

Other Upcoming Conferences/Training:

FTA Substance Abuse Training Sessions
April 20 Seoux Falls, SD
May 4 Flint, MI
May 17 & 18 Brooklyn, NY
<http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/Training/655Seminars/default.asp>

FTA Financial Management Oversight Seminars for Transit Systems
April 21-22 Seattle, WA
June 2-3 Boston, MA
August 11-12 Washington, D.C.

Texas Transit Association Annual Conference
May 15-18 El Paso, TX

TRB 16th National Conference on Rural Public & Intercity Bus Transportation
October 24-27 Roanoke, VA
www.trb.org/calendar

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

MANAGEMENT AND INSPECTION

April 20-22 Baton Rouge, LA

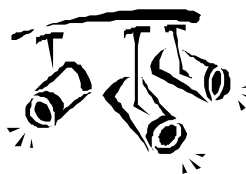
CTAA Expo
June 12-18 Seattle, WA

NTI Courses:

Managing the Cost of ADA Paratransit Services
April 21-22 New York, NY
May 12-13 Des Moines, IA

Comprehensive ADA Paratransit Eligibility
April 28-30 San Jose, CA

NTI/FTA New Infectious Disease Awareness & Prevention Courses
April 20 St. Louis, MO
May 18 Sacramento, CA
May 24 Colorado Springs, CO
www.ntionline.com



Spotlight on...

LaDOTD Public Transportation Adds New Rural Transit Providers

The Public Transportation Section at LaDOTD is proud to announce two new rural transportation providers. The two 'new starts' are in Allen Parish and St. Mary Parish:

Allen Parish

The Allen Council on Aging (COA) began providing rural transportation services in July of 2003. The COA's main office is in Oakdale but they offer services to all of Allen Parish. This new service was part of a systematic expansion of services to the residents of Allen Parish that began over 20 years ago.

According to Executive Director, Patricia Jones, who recently joined the Allen COA, transportation services have always been a problem in Allen Parish. The COA has been providing limited services to the elderly for over 20 years. Two years ago, the COA went from a two van fleet to five vans and started providing non-emergency medical transportation services.

In 2003, a small dialysis clinic in the City of Oakdale was closed and left many patients in Allen Parish with few options. The COA stepped in and began transporting these patients to other clinics in Eunice and Mamou. Ms. Jones says the COA has been providing those services on a shoe-string budget, "but these people had no other choice."

Ms. Jones said that matching funds for the rural transportation program will be a difficult and on-going problem. The Allen COA is currently using in-kind match from the Sheriff's Office, funds from the Governor's Office of Elderly Affairs, and their non-emergency medical transportation funds, which come from the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals as match for the rural operating grant. LaDOTD has recently approved the Allen COA for the purchase of two additional vehicles, one 12 passenger/two wheel chair vehicle and one mini van.

St. Mary Parish

The St. Mary Community Action Agency (CAA), whose Executive Director is Almetra Franklin, recently added rural transportation to the list of services offered by the agency. St. Mary CAA began operating a rural program in January 2004.

According to the CAA's Transportation Director, Jeffrey Beverly, the agency has been providing various special transportation services for the past 10 years. Among those services are Title 19 Non-emergency medical transportation services funded through the Department of Health and Hospitals and Findwork (currently funded as the STEP program) transportation services funded through the Department of Social

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RTA Conducts ADA Awareness Education Summit

Transportation Management of Southeast Louisiana (TMSEL), in service to the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) in New Orleans, recently initiated a summit to educate and train all employees on ADA ridership issues. The summit, *RTA and ADA: Total Compliance through Knowledge and Teamwork*, focused on topics relating to policies, procedures and physical requirements, in reference to providing access to public transportation for people with disabilities. The ADA specifies that public transportation must provide access to the disabled community on Fixed Route Service, as well as provide Paratransit Services for those with disabilities that prevent them from riding the Fixed Route system.

The summit will continue until it has educated the work staff to the importance of complying with the ADA. The summit stresses the need for a positive attitude when dealing with the public and instructs the workforce on how to deal with different types of disabilities. The sessions train operators on the proper procedures for operating wheelchair lifts and passenger-handling procedures to safely secure and transport passengers with disabilities. In addition, the summit addresses the use of appropriate terminology, demonstrates how to relate and communicate with people with disabilities, identifies prohibited actions and stresses the practice of disability-related etiquette.

The seminar offers a unique opportunity for employees to hear from individuals from the disabled community. A panel discussion focuses on factors such as visual impairment, mobility impairment and functional impairment from the perspective of folks that can personally relate to the real needs of people with disabilities. Participants suggest that a straightforward shift of attention from the

disability to the person makes all the difference in customer relations. Furthermore, panel participants who share their personal experiences suggest that transit operators who are unsure on how to assist someone with a disability should simply ask.

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Dr. Rosalyn Simon, the federal consent decree monitor, participated in the first five sessions. She spoke on the law and trends in ADA. During these first sessions Mr. Albert Jenkins, a streetcar operator with the transit company for over 23 years, was presented the 2003 "ADA Champion of the Year" award. Future sessions in 2004 will recognize the "ADA Champion of the Month" and "ADA Champion of the Quarter".

To achieve a higher level of professionalism and better prepare its employees, RTA

will continue this education program throughout 2004. RTA believes that the importance of communicating effectively and servicing customers with disabilities must be emphasized.



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goals were to increase the cost-effectiveness of resources used for specialized and human service transportation and increase access to these services.

The Council funded projects to identify, document, and disseminate successful coordination practices to recipients of Federal assistance. The Council has also supported other activities to develop an extensive knowledge base and enhance the capabilities of public transportation providers. In 1998, the Council was renamed the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility to better define its mission and encourage full participation of other Federal departments.

In 1999 the GAO released a "Report to Congressional Committees" entitled, "Transportation Coordination: Benefits and Barriers Exist and Planning Efforts Progress Slowly." That report pointed to slow, but ongoing coordination efforts and enumerated the benefits. The following is an excerpt from the report's results:

"Transportation coordination can reduce federal transportation program costs by clustering passengers, utilizing fewer one-way trips, and sharing the use of transportation personnel, equipment, and facilities. In addition, people in need of transportation often benefit from the greater and higher quality transportation services available when transportation providers coordinate their operations. A study by the Community Transportation Association of America, a nonprofit transportation association, presented five case studies that showed significant reductions in the average cost per passenger and vehicle hour as a result of transportation coordination. In one instance, the local human services agency's average cost per passenger trip decreased from \$7.92 to \$4.06, and the average cost per vehicle hour declined from \$12.83 to \$6.89. In addition, the five case studies showed that following transportation

coordination, there was an increase in the number of trips per month and total trips per passenger hour, while the total number of vehicles in the agencies' fleets held steady or declined."

In May of 2003, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Committee on Education and the Workforce held a Joint Hearing on Coordinating Human Services Transportation. One fact evident at the Hearing was a general agreement that within Congress and many of the States there is a desire for coordination. Approximately one-half of all U.S. States have a coordinating body of some kind, though the level of support for such coordination

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During the Hearing, three categories of obstacles that impede coordination efforts were defined. Also defined were three potential options to improve coordination. While some mention was made of coordination at the state and local level, each of the obstacles and potential solutions pointed to barriers at the federal level.

Finally, in June of 2003, the GAO produced another report on coordination in response to inquiries from Congressional Members. The report was entitled, "Transportation Disadvantaged Populations: Some Coordination Efforts Among Programs Providing Transportation Services, but Obstacles Persist." In the report, the GAO identified the following pertinent facts:

- ❖ There are 62 federal programs used to fund transportation services for transportation-disadvantaged populations.
- ❖ Sixteen of the programs seem particularly relevant and were identified by the Community Transportation Association of America as being regularly used to fund transportation services.
- ❖ Another 11 programs were notable, in that transportation spending under each one was

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at least \$4 million in FY 2001.

- ❖ The full extent of spending for transportation services was not identifiable since many programs do not require specific transportation expenditure reporting.
- ❖ In the 29 programs for which actual spending was identified, \$2.4 billion in federal funds was expended in FY 2001.
- ❖ DHHS programs spent about three-quarters of the total amount.
- ❖ State and local match varies on the programs (generally 5% to 50%) which greatly increases the total expenditures.

The 2003 GAO report went on to point out the various obstacles that exist at the federal level to effective coordination.

Executive Order

The main thrust of the President's action is two-fold: 1) recognition of a topic that is a mainstay for most local public transportation providers and state DOT program managers, and 2) creation of a vehicle for reform. The vehicle takes the form of a national coordinating council with expanded membership. The Executive Order established the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility.

The new Council consists of the following members: Secretaries of Transportation, Health and Human Service, Education, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, and the Interior, the Attorney General, and the Commissioner of Social Security. The Secretary of Transportation will serve as Chairperson and is empowered to appoint other members as needed.

The Council has several mandates, but they all point to one central theme: provide more and better transportation for less money!

For more information, see coordination links on the LaDOTD Public Transportation website.

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Services. In 2002, the CAA began receiving Job Access / Reverse Commute funds from LaDOTD.

The St. Mary CAA currently operates 12 vehicles on a daily basis and has been approved to purchase another five by LaDOTD. The new vehicles will be 12 passenger vans.

In addition to the Title 19, STEP, and JARC funds, the CAA receives HUD Homeless funds and CSBG funds administered by the Department of Labor. Mr. Beverly says that, while matching funds for the rural transportation program will always be an issue, the CAA is fortunate to receive assistance directly from St. Mary Parish in the form of a \$25,500 allocation from the Parish general fund.



From Capital Hill...

On February 12th, the Senate voted to pass it's six-year reauthorization of TEA-21.

The bill clearly supports future investment in highways, railroads and public transit.

The price tag is \$318 billion, which includes \$56.5 billion for public and community transportation services. The Senate's version of the bill also includes a \$12 billion reauthorization of Amtrak.

The House will now take up their version of the Bill. There is concern among some House members over the proposed \$375 billion price tag and the predication that it will be funded through annually increased federal motor fuel tax collections.